

# Chairman Dingell at the Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee on Energy and Air Quality Joint hearing entitled "The Environmental Protection Agency Fiscal Year 2008 Budget Request"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND AIR QUALITY  
HEARING ENTITLED  
"THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY  
FISCAL YEAR 2008 BUDGET REQUEST"  
MARCH 8, 2007

Chairman Wynn and Chairman Boucher, thank you for holding this hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2008. This is the first time during the Bush Administration that the EPA Administrator has come before this Committee to justify the Agency's funding request for environmental protection, and I welcome Administrator Johnson here today.

EPA plays a vital role in protecting the public health of our Nation by ensuring the water we drink is safe, the air we breathe is clean, that waste being generated is managed properly, and the legacy of toxic waste sites is cleaned up expeditiously.

After reviewing the President's Fiscal Year 2008 Budget, I can only conclude that it fails to meet the Administrator's professed goal of accelerating the pace of environmental protection, and, in many areas, the budget falls woefully short of needs previously identified by EPA. Perhaps Administrator Johnson can tell us why EPA was one of only two agencies "the other being the Department of Labor" that will face actual decreases in the President's budget. Clearly, the President has not made environmental protection a priority.

To clean up leaking underground storage tanks that are polluting drinking water supplies, the President's Budget requests \$72.5 million. In contrast, the Trust Fund will receive over \$300 million in annual revenues and the Trust Fund surplus dedicated to these cleanups is projected to be over \$3 billion in FY08. American consumers are being taxed but the money is not being used for the specific purpose for which it is collected.

The Government Accountability Office has recently identified a \$12 billion public funding need, and EPA has acknowledged over 113,000 releases from leaking underground storage tanks that have not been addressed.

For Brownfields grants to help local communities with site assessments and cleanups, the President continues his request from last year of \$89 million even though the Conference of Mayors testified last week that only one in three applications have been funded for the past several years. The Administration describes the Brownfield program as a vital jobs creation and economic revitalization program. If that is so, why did the President cut his Brownfield grant budget request by \$31 million or 26 percent from FY06?

The Drinking Water State Revolving Fund helps public water systems finance the costs of infrastructure improvements needed to achieve or maintain compliance and protect public health. EPA's last Drinking Water Infrastructure Needs

Survey and Assessment identified the total State need as \$263.3 billion dollars. The President's budget request of \$842 million is the lowest in the history of the program, when adjusted for inflation.

In Superfund, the budget requests have been going down consistently over the past five years. There are numerous toxic waste sites on the National Priorities List where cleanup has been delayed for lack of funds. Large funding shortfalls have been identified by the EPA Inspector General and acknowledged by senior EPA officials. Rather than expediting the rate at which Superfund sites are cleaned up, EPA has failed to meet the Agency's own 2007 projections and just recently announced a reduction of 40 percent in construction completions. Only 24 Superfund sites will complete construction activities this year.

The States carry out, enforce, and implement most of our major environmental statutes. Last week the Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials was told by senior State environmental officials that if Congress accepts the 2008 proposal for STAG (State and Territorial Assistance Grants), it will mean that States will have lost more than \$1 billion in federal support since 2004. The Subcommittee should examine the extent to which EPA has been shifting money away from the States to pay for pet projects or programs not specifically authorized by this Committee or Congress.

The President's budget would cut State and local air quality management grants by \$35 million, or 15 percent, from Fiscal Year 2006 levels. These grants provide the money needed to pay State and local employee salaries and other expenses to develop and run core State and local air programs. These programs, which are required by Federal law, reduce the pollution that causes asthma attacks, premature death, and other respiratory and cardio-pulmonary problems.

Serious cuts have also been proposed for the EPA's Office of Inspector General (OIG) which the Acting Inspector General has characterized as "unwelcome and disappointing." OIG employees have been told that the President's budget will likely result in closed offices and a reduction-in-force for personnel.

Mr. Chairman, these are important hearings in fulfilling the Committee's oversight responsibilities. I look forward to Administrator Johnson's testimony.

- 30 -

(Contact: Committee on Energy and Commerce Press Office, 202-225-5735)

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515